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# **Crisis and Opportunity: Realizing the Hopes of a Hemisphere**

**By  
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[The following are excerpts of the remarks presented to the Council of the Americas' 33rd Annual Washington Conference, Loy Henderson Conference Room, Washington, D.C., April 28, 2003.]

I am always pleased to meet with the Council, and I am pleased that this is the third straight year that I have had such an opportunity, because this Council embodies within its collective presence all the values that we hold dear; free markets, democracy and the rule of law. By trading and investment, that which you are so interested in, you create jobs, you expand opportunity, and you promote development for the people of our hemisphere, so that the people of our hemisphere can see that democracy and the free market system is for them. It is not just for business, it is not just for the purpose of making a profit, but for the purpose of bringing hope into their lives and putting food on their tables, and to giving a better future to each and every one of their children.

In Iraq, we have just come through a time of great peril. You have all joined with me and people around the world watching the brave young men and women of the American, British, Australian and other coalition countries, who came together and liberated the Iraqi people from the yoke of Saddam Hussein and his thugs. I am so proud of those young men and women and I know that you are so proud of them as well. And who among us will ever forget some of the scenes that came across our television sets, the scene of unbridled joy when together, Iraqis and Americans, toppled that huge statute of Saddam Hussein, which dominated Baghdad's central square. As I watched it on television, I was in the outer office of the President; the President was in his office. I had just come out of a meeting, and there on the television set in his assistant's office was this scene.

The President came out, and we all sat transfixed by this image of the statue slowly being pulled over after a great deal of work by two American Marines and the Iraqi people. And as a soldier, I kept looking at it, and I was nervous because these two soldiers were by themselves on their personnel retriever with the crane up. And I kept saying, "Where is their security?" "Is not there a war going on?" And they were just two Marines who would not miss this opportunity. But at that moment, they had help, not from fellow Marines, not from fellow soldiers in the Army, but from the Iraqi people who were there in the square, who welcomed them, who saw they were having trouble, so helped them as, together, Iraqis and Americans tore down this statue, the statue that celebrated despotism, terror, weapons of mass destruction.

Who will forget the photographs of tens of thousands of Iraqi Shiites marching on a pilgrimage to their holy city of Karbala for the first time in a quarter century peacefully? For twenty-five years, they had been prevented from practicing their faith in this noble way by somebody who claimed to be faithful, somebody who claimed to be a believer, somebody who claimed the faith of Islam, said he was a Muslim but would not let Shiites practice their faith. And here, in this one moment, suddenly they were free to assemble by the tens upon tens of thousands, without a bunch of soldiers guarding them. We kept our distance so that they could peacefully participate in this important pilgrimage. This all may seem faraway and distant. Baghdad may seem far from Bogota and the cares of Iraqis far removed from the daily struggles of Argentina. But the countries of our hemisphere have had, and continue, to have an important role in eliminating the threat from Iraq's weapons of mass destruction and bringing new hope to the Iraqi people. Seven of our Latin American friends are members of the coalition of the willing that President Bush assembled to free Iraq.

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And I also want to thank the Presidents of Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Nicaragua and Panama for their courageous stand for what is right, what is necessary, and what is just. And now we are counting on the Latin American members of the United Nations Security Council to join us in making sure that the Council can fulfill its vital role in the reconstruction of Iraq. Security Council membership brings important responsibilities and requires tough decisions, and it is no secret that there was disappointment when some of our friends did not agree with us on the need for a follow-on to *Security Council Resolution 1441*, which gave the Iraqi regime one last chance to disarm peacefully.

But that is behind us now. Saddam and his regime are gone. The statues lie in the dust and we now have an opportunity to come together to make sure that the Security Council lives up to its responsibilities. We all join together to help the Iraqi people build a better nation, to give Iraqi children hope, just as we wish every child in our own hemisphere to have hope and a brighter future. Iraq is very important and it has certainly dominated the headlines and dominated political life, not only in Washington but around the world for a number of months now, but President Bush has a foreign policy agenda that goes well beyond Iraq or the particular military crisis of the moment.

Last fall, the President issued a document called *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*. And in that short, simple document of thirty-odd pages, he laid out his agenda for all to see. Many people saw that document and they jumped at just a couple of sentences that talked about the tactic of preemption, a way of taking military action, and suggested that this whole document was about preemption. But nothing could be further from the truth. Preemption is just a small section in the document, and not a strategy. If you really looked at the whole document, you would see a strategy emerge, a strategy that talks to the role of the United States in helping people around the world to meet their aspirations, and the role that we intend to play to help them do that. The President's agenda, you would see from that document, is focused on people's desire for human dignity and well-being. The document talks about working with friends and allies. It talks about building up our alliances. It talks about economic development. It talks about sustainable development. It pledges cooperation with our friends and allies, not only to meet today's security threats, but also to boost trade, conquer infectious disease and strengthen democracy. That is an agenda that is directly relevant to our hemisphere, and that is the agenda of President Bush and all of the members of his cabinet.

None of our goals are more important than the war against terrorism, of course. Barely a year and a half after the attacks of September 11, 2001, the world is still at war with terrorists in Iraq and Afghanistan and everywhere that they plot their crimes. There can be no respite, no rest until the terrorists are defeated, and they will be defeated. From day one to this day, the nations of our hemisphere have stood together against terrorists. It was on September 11, 2001, that my colleagues in the Organization of the American States, when we were all together in Lima, were the first to come together to condemn the attacks on the Pentagon and the World Trade Center.

Since then, in word and in deed, the democratic countries of the region have cooperated to search out terrorists, dismantle their networks and freeze their funds. We must continue to cooperate with equal vigor to meet the many other challenges confronting our hemisphere, from the danger to Colombia from terrorists and narcotraffickers to the peril to Venezuela from political upheaval. We must do a better job of reducing the threat to our citizens from trafficking in drugs and arms, and especially trafficking in people. We have an opportunity to come together and defeat human immuno-deficiency virus/acquired immune deficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS), the greatest weapon of mass destruction on the face of the earth today, putting millions of lives at risk right now, as we sit here, throughout the world.

Our human ties are our most precious bonds. Over thirty-three million Americans proudly trace their heritage and their descent from the nations of Latin America. Our challenge is to work together on borders and immigration to make sure that we continue to welcome legitimate travelers while screening out terrorists. We must remain and we will remain an open, welcoming

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nation. We are a nation of nations. We are touched by every nation and we, in turn, touch every nation on the face of the earth, every nation in this hemisphere.

And so in the post-September 11, 2001 aftermath, there was a need for us to know who is coming into our country, and we are doing better at that. We are putting in place better systems to check the backgrounds of people who want to come here. We will speed it up, we will make it easier, because we understand that America has to be an open place, has to be a welcoming nation. History has taught us that no country, not even a superpower, can meet challenges such as the challenges we face alone. Solutions must be hemispheric solutions. So, too, with opportunities. The spread of democratic and economic freedom has opened unprecedented opportunities to lift millions of men, women and children out of misery.

Trade is the most powerful engine for development, and neighbors are natural trading partners. The *North American Free Trade Agreement* (NAFTA) shows how freeing trade across borders helps people. In less than a decade, trade among the NAFTA partners has more than doubled, bringing more and better jobs. In Mexico, the export sector has created over half of all new manufacturing jobs, and these are jobs that pay, on average, 40 percent more. To expand this circle of prosperity, we are working toward freer trade at every level and every day. Bilaterally, we have concluded a free trade agreement with Chile that will remove the disadvantages American companies currently face while helping Chile grow, grow even more than it has in the past. It has had a remarkable record of growth and development, and with this free trade agreement it can do even better.

We also support strengthening economic relations with groups of countries in our hemisphere. We have implemented an expanded trade program with the Andean nations that provides duty-free access to the U.S. market for some 5,600 different items. In addition to stimulating trade and development, this program also provides incentives to Andean farmers to find alternatives to illicit crops. We are working with the Central American nations to finish free trade talks with them by the end of this year. At the same time, we have launched programs to help the Central American countries compete in the modern, global economy. The fifty projects included in this program include funding for computers to make government agencies more efficient, projects to help increase civilians and citizens involved in trade negotiations, and assistance to strengthen food safety inspection systems. This may all sound rather mundane, rather down to earth, but these are the everyday details, the everyday programs that can determine whether a country can attract the capital and investment that it needs to grow.

At the regional level, we place a high priority on linking our entire hemisphere in a Free Trade Area of the Americas. Two years ago at the Quebec Summit of the Americas, our presidents and prime ministers committed themselves to creating, by January 2005, a free trade area that would create greater prosperity for nearly 800 million people in thirty-four countries of our hemisphere. To move negotiations forward, the United States has announced a bold, comprehensive offer to eliminate tariffs and trade barriers. All of this activity is taking place against the backdrop of our efforts to expand global openness, growth and development through a successful Doha development round of World Trade talks. The next World Trade Organization ministerial meeting will be held in this hemisphere in Cancun, Mexico. Bob Zoellick, the U.S. Trade Representative, is leading the charge to make that meeting a complete success. We will do our part to open the hemisphere to the benefits of freer trade and investment. But our friends, public and private, must also get involved to ensure that the final agreements give the biggest boost to our economies and offer the greatest benefit to our citizens.

We need other governments to negotiate in good faith, with the well-being of their citizens uppermost in mind; and we need business people, like you assembled here today, to advise us and push us to conclude and ratify strong agreements. We can combat terrorism and trafficking, we can fight disease, we can strengthen human ties, we can expand trade, but none of our efforts will be enough if men and women lack confidence in their democracies and their prospects for a better future.

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Last year, standing before this group, I warned of a lingering dissatisfaction with the quality of democracy and the results of economic reform. Despite some progress over the past year, dissatisfaction remains. In part, such feelings are a measure of how far our hemisphere has come, politically and economically. I remember vividly back in the 1980's, the late 1980's, when I was National Security Advisor to President Reagan, too much of the hemisphere was ruled by generals and dictators. We were worried about infiltration from other parts of the world of communist influence that would cause nations on a path to democracy to reverse course and go the other way. But today, every country but one has a freely elected president or prime minister. Former adversaries compete in the democratic arena of electoral politics.

The sole exception is the well-known exception, Cuba. The Castro regime is cracking down on Cuban citizens who dare ask for a voice in how they are governed. Far from offering liberty and hope, the regime is turning to arrests and harsh prison sentences, ten, fifteen, twenty, twenty-two years for speaking out, all in a vain effort to stamp out the Cuban people's thirst for democracy. We applaud the nations of Latin America that introduced and supported the recent resolution in the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, insisting that Cuba accept a special human rights envoy. The Castro government's refusal to accept the U.N. inquiry only condemns it further, proves the case against it.

Why would Castro reject scrutiny if he has nothing to hide? We know the reason. He has everything to hide. Now the Organization of American States (OAS) is taking up Cuba's human rights practices. We look to our friends in the OAS to live up to the ideals we share and take a principled stand for freedom, democracy and human rights in Cuba. We look to them to join us in developing a common hemispheric approach to supporting Cubans dedicated to building a democratic and free Cuba. We can do no less, for our hemisphere will not be fully free until the Cuban people are free.

Political progress in the region has gone hand in hand with the economic reforms. Although many countries face severe economic challenges, the old demons are gone: inflation is largely tamed; countries are increasingly open to foreign trade and investment; economic setbacks occur but no longer lead inevitably, as the night follows the day, to economic crises affecting the whole hemisphere. These improvements have created increased expectations for good government and broader responsibility and prosperity. People have sacrificed and they want to see the results in their pocketbooks, in their pay packets and in their polling places.

But too many people still suffer from weak governments and ineffective institutions. In too many places, rule of law and property rights are honored mainly in the breach of those rights and the breach of the law. Children are not adequately educated for jobs in a globalizing world or citizenship in a democracy; health care systems are failing; corruption still saps the marrow of democracy and, like terrorism, it is all too widespread; economic stagnation and even deep recession retard development. So the challenge to the governments of the region, of the hemisphere, are clear. They must meet their people's just expectations for a better future. To do so, they must see political, institutional and economic reforms through to completion, no matter how difficult. To do so, they need support from friendly governments, but also from friendly businesses. The election of President Lula in Brazil is a powerful example of voters using the democratic process in search of better lives.

It is important for the hemisphere that this experiment in reform, this experiment in reform through democracy, succeeds to be an example for the entire region and the entire world. The people of Argentina are also seeking an electoral route to better lives. Yesterday they voted in the first round of presidential elections. We all hope that the new government, when selected and in place, will be able to move that great nation forward. Paraguayans, too, have elected a new president, and we wish the president all the best in his efforts to strengthen Paraguay's democratic institutions.

The challenges that our hemisphere confronts and the solutions to those challenges are intertwined, totally intertwined. Political stability and security require and reinforce economic

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growth. Good governance is essential to all. The problems are difficult, but they are not insufferable. The coming years can, and should, be a time of progress, a time of success. Hemispheric progress requires continued American engagement in trade, in security, in support for democracy, and across the board we are deeply involved in expanding peace, prosperity and freedom in this hemisphere. These are the essential elements of the President's foreign policy agenda and these will not change.

Progress also requires the deep commitment of the countries of the region. We are seeing commitment, but more needs to be done to complete the reforms needed to give new generations new hope. And progress requires business activity, investing, trading and doing business where good policies are in place; spreading best practices where they can make a difference; and supporting responsible policies that free entrepreneurs, educate children and improve the health of all.

In the final analysis, progress relies on partnerships between different governments, between governments and their citizens, and between governments and business. In the Council of the Americas, the governments of the Americas have a wonderful partner for progress.

I want to thank you for all that you are doing to achieve our mutual goals. I congratulate all of you for your energy, your commitment and your impact. And as I have said to this group on previous occasions, never lose sight of who we are doing this for; not for those of us assembled in this room, but for the poorest of our citizens, who will not read any of these speeches, who will not watch any of this on television, who will go to bed, perhaps, a little hungry, who will wonder about whether their child will be clothed and whether their child will go to school or whether their child will have a better life than they are having. They are what it is all about. We told them that democracy would work. We told them that if they went down this road, there would be a better life for them. We told them that the free market economic system would work. We told them that if they moved in this direction, if they were not afraid of globalism, they would find a better life. We told them that there would be opportunities to educate their children for the kind of jobs that are going to be out there. We told them there would opportunities to improve their infrastructure so that they can convert their countries into more fertile ground for investment because there is an adequate infrastructure. We told them many things. We made them many promises. And now they look to us here in this room and to political leaders throughout the hemisphere to deliver. And if we collectively do not deliver, then democracy has no meaning, the free market system has no meaning, and it is possible for us to go backward. But I am not worried about going backwards. I am only thinking about moving forward because I believe we are committed to doing all of the things that will be necessary to make sure that the hope that we have put in their heart is realized in the better life that they will see in the future.